

OFFICIAL**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

URN

46

Statement of: **Christopher Hill**.....Age if under 18: **Over 18** (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: **Police Constable 12000**

This statement (consisting of 6 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature: **C. Hill** Date: **16/12/2020**Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

I am a police officer based at Medway Police Station. I joined Kent Police in January 2005 meaning I have served as Police Officer for nearly 16 years. For the past 6 years I have worked as part of the North Division Licensing Team based within the Community Safety Unit at Medway. This role predominately involves implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 with the aim of reducing crime and disorder and increasing safety around licensed premises.

On Monday 14th December 2020 I conducted a review of a CCTV hard drive which had been seized from the Hop and Rye Public House, Hollywood Lane, Rochester. This analysis of the CCTV footage was completed in preparation for Premises License Review of the Hop and Rye following reports of repeated breaching of coronavirus restrictions and the opening of the premises for licensable activity when the premise could not lawfully do so.

On viewing the footage from the CCTV hard drive of the Hop and Rye I saw the premises open and selling apparent alcoholic drinks for consumption on the premises on the following times and dates (times and dates as listed on the CCTV hard drive):

Friday 27th November –between 13:16 and 20:26Thursday 26th November –between 12:36 and 18:20Monday 23rd November –Between 11:21-11:46Sunday 22nd November –between 13:52 and 18:15Signature: **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by: **N/A**

Continuation page 2

URN

46

Continuation statement of: **Christopher Hill**
Saturday 21st November –between 16:38 and 18:47

Friday 20th November – between 16:12 to 17:31

Tuesday 17th November – between 18:37 and 19:36

Thursday 12th November – between 12:20 and 20:34

Wednesday 11th November- between 17:19 and 19:26

A national lockdown was imposed in England on 5th November 2020 as part of the UK Government's response to the rising infection rate of Covid-19. This required that pubs could only operate a takeaway service, making it a breach of these regulations for consumption to be permitted on site. The footage from the Hop and Rye shows that the management at this premises allowed customers to consume drinks on the premises on nine separate occasions within a sixteen-day period. This not only shows a complete disregard for the law in terms of the Government imposed lockdown but also exposed numerous people to a potential risk of infection to a virus that has so far killed thousands of people nationally.

Footage from the Friday 27th November 2020 showed that between 13:16 hours and 20:25 hours the premises licence holder (Mr Michael Knight) allowed entry to the premises to 6 customers, all of which consumed alcohol on site. During this time no person was wearing a mask or face covering and social distancing was not observed. I observed at least 19 different sales of alcohol from the CCTV footage all of these sales were made by Michael Knight from behind the bar. All consumption and all sales were made in the rear bar of the premises, I believe that this was the case in an attempt to keep these 'lock ins' hidden from authorities. The only other person present in the footage that I know the details of are Ian Wilson who I understand is one of the lease/business

Signature **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by **N/A**

Continuation page 3

URN

46

Continuation statement of: **Christopher Hill**
owners of the Hop and Rye. This lock in only came to an end at this time because PC Hunt and I attended the premises, discovering it open.

Footage from Thursday 26th November 2020 showed that between 12:36 hours and 18:33 hours the premises licence holder (Mr Michael Knight) allowed entry to 7 customers, all of which consumed alcohol on site. A large proportion of these customers were different to those that attended the lock-in on Friday 27th November. Between these times Michael Knight made at least 6 sales of alcohol from the bar. All sales were made in the back bar. During this footage Michael Knight and Ian Wilson can be seen playing pool together and laughing together. The front entrance door is locked throughout these times and opened by Michael Knight on each occasion to let customers in. It appears that this 'lock in' wasn't by invitation only. At 13:59 hours the footage shows a male arrive at the bar, whilst wearing a mask and holding empty milk cartons ready for them to be filled for a takeaway. Whilst this off sale is taking place; this male appears to notice the back bar being used. He wanders through and joins those already present in the back bar and purchases further drinks (in addition to his filled containers), which are served in glasses and consumed in the back bar. Ian Wilson and six other males are seen to leave the bar at 17:53 hours, leaving Michael Knight and one other male in the bar. They play at least four frames of pool and continue to consume alcohol on the premises during this time.

Footage from Monday 23rd November 2020 shows Michael Knight serve a drink to an unknown male at 11:21 hours. This male consumes the drink on site whilst chatting to Michael Knight before leaving at 11:46. No other persons are present between these times.

Signature **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by **N/A**

Continuation page 4

URN

46

Continuation statement of: **Christopher Hill**

Footage from Sunday 22nd November 2020 shows Michael Knight and Ian Wilson present in the pub at 13:52 hours. Ian Wilson is seen to purchase alcohol, handing money to Michael who then serves the drink. Ian Wilson and Michael Knight play pool together whilst both consuming alcohol. They are joined by another male around 40 minutes later. At 14:33 hours a male and female enter the pub through the front door. They stand at the front bar for a while, without being noticed (this is because Michael Knight is busy playing pool in the back bar). They enter the back bar and appear surprised to see persons present inside. They appear to be invited into the back, whereby they purchase drinks and sit down to consume them inside. There are 5 people present in total. At least 6 alcohol sales are observed on the footage before they all leave the site at 18:15 hours the same day.

Footage from Saturday 21st 2020 November shows Ian Wilson Arrives at the pub with an unknown female at 16:38 hours. They pay for and are served alcohol by Michael Knight which is then consumed in the back bar. They are joined by another unknown male at 18:09 hours who looks as if he was initially wanted a takeaway sale (he arrived with empty drink containers for filling). The unknown male walks through to the back bar where he is sold alcohol in a glass by Michael Knight and consumes it on site with the other present. He also has his drink containers filled and later takes them away with him. All persons leave at 18:47 hours.

Footage form Friday 20th November 2020 shows an unknown male and female arrive at 16:12 hours. They purchase drinks from Michael Knight. They consume these drinks in the back bar, whilst socialising with Michael Knight, who is also consuming alcohol. The couple leave at 17:31 hours.

Signature **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by **N/A**

Continuation page 5

URN

46

Continuation statement of: **Christopher Hill**

Footage from Tuesday 17th November 2020 shows 4 males (including Ian Wilson) purchasing and consuming alcohol in the back bar of the premises between 18:37 and 19:36 hours. Payment for these drinks is taken by Michael Knight.

Footage from Thursday 12th November 2020 shows 9 people (including Ian Wilson and Michael Knight) on the premises, again in the back bar. This occurs between 12:20 and 20:34 hours. Numerous alcohol sales take place, all of which are served by Michael Knight in exchange for money.

Footage from Wednesday 11th November 2020 shows Michael Knight and an unknown female sat in the back bar of the pub. Between the hours of 17:19 and 19:26 Michael Knight and the female sit and consume alcohol together. The female appears to purchase alcoholic drinks from the bar, handing money to Michael Knight.

In addition to the reviewing CCTV footage on the above listed dates, I also checked the footage from between Saturday 31st October to Wednesday 4th November 2020 inclusive. I checked these days because this time period was prior to national lockdown and therefore public houses, including the Hop and Rye were able to open and have customers inside. There were however a number of restrictions imposed by the government on the trade at that time in an attempt to curb the infection rate occurring during this pandemic. These measures included but were not limited to: the wearing of masks whilst moving around the public house (by staff and customer unless exempt), the serving of all drinks to tables to limit the movement of people inside, a 22:00 terminal hour, and 'the rule of 6'. From viewing the footage of five days of operation whilst under these restrictions – I would state that in my professional opinion the premises were highly non-compliant with the regulations at this time. Throughout the footage on all dates mentioned, table service is not adhered to, with customer

Signature **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by **N/A**

Continuation page 6

URN

46

Continuation statement of: **Christopher Hill**

almost unanimously served drinks after approaching or queueing at the bar. Numerous people can be seen walking around the bar without the wearing of face masks, without this being challenged by staff. There are a multitude of occasion when groups are seen to congregate in numbers larger than 6, in addition to groups of people intermixing. All of these factors again would put the public at greater risk of either exposure to or the spreading of the Covid-19 virus.

Signature **C. Hill**Signature witnessed by **N/A**